

ASLI QoL2015, Annual Serial Landmark International Conferences on Quality of Life

ASEAN-Turkey ASLI QoL2015

AicQoL2015Jakarta, Indonesia. AMER International Conference on Quality of Life

The Akmani Hotel, Jakarta, Indonesia, 25-27 April 2015

"Quality of Life in the Built & Natural Environment 3"

Maimoon Palace Heritage District in Medan, Indonesia: What we preserve and why we preserve?

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Abstract

Preservation includes both tangible and intangible elements. In a historical tourism area, the identity of a place indicates a unique place and motivates preservation for it can support the quality of life by giving personal experiences and driving economic growth. Maimoon Palace Heritage District is a tourism area known as Medan city landmark whose landscape was formed during Dutch Indies period. By combining qualitative and quantitative method, this study aims to determine the preservation aspects based on place identity. The finding shows that preservation should include elements of historical buildings, historical stories, the experience of the past, and availability of public facilities to support the identity of the place.

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Peer-review under responsibility of AMER (Association of Malaysian Environment-Behaviour Researchers) and cE-Bs (Centre for Environment- Behaviour Studies, Faculty of Architecture, Planning & Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia).

Keywords: Preservation; identity of place; Maimoon Palace heritage district; Medan city

1. Introduction

A heritage in a city plays a big role in creating the significance of the area while enhancing the society's quality of life. Ashworth (2007) stated that there is an identity in heritage place that is generated by the history where the

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identity becomes the heritage tourism attraction. Hence, the value of the identity must be included in heritage area planning. In heritage area that grows as a tourism destination, the spatial planning based on place identity even becomes more crucial. It is the main attraction of the area that can improve the tourists emotional and psychological reactions (Otto and Ritchie, 1996 in Ryan and Page, 2000). Thereby, it will produce tourists satisfaction and keep the tourism activities going.

Preservation lately has become the answer for maintaining the place identity, because it aims to keep the urban heritage and the sense of place in an area. With the rapid growing of modernization, the cities over the world need to keep their identity. On the other hand, preservation closely relates to the history of the place. The history becomes necessary for it can satisfy a variety of needs such as arts, tourism, esthetics, and recreation. In fact, these needs are some entertaining indicator that can improve the quality of life (Gregory et al., 2009 in Mohit, 2013) and bring the positive image of the area. Therefore, the effort of preservation is crucial to keep the memory of the history. The purpose of preservation are to teach people about their predecessor's history and culture, to give identity to a community, and to provide evidence of continuity between past, present, and future (Goodwin et al, 2009).

This study attempted to find the right act of preservation in Maimoon Palace Heritage District in Medan City; to discuss what elements that should be preserved and why we preserve. Therefore, this study can contribute a better planning for Medan City that shows its identity and improve the people quality of life.

2. Preservation based on place identity

Preservation can be interpreted as an attempt to preserve and maintain the heritage inheritance, both physical and non-physical. People usually describe it as an effort to maintain the architectural heritage and traditional environment exactly with the original state, without addition or subtraction of the esthetic value. Furthermore, some experts explain preservation can include a various process, from small repair, renovation, and even restoration. The preservation background and the condition of the objects later will influence the processes. In fact, preservation is not only connected with the physical elements of the building, but also non-physical elements. It is because the non-physical elements are also part of the physical elements and describe the place identity.

Communities nowadays have big enthusiasm in the preservation towards their heritage and history values (Greffé, 2004 in Azhari and Mohamed, 2012). People start to realize that preservation can fulfill so many needs such as arts, tourism, recreation, even improve the quality of life. For example, the building that brings distinctiveness and reflects the local people culture can advance the quality of life in the area (Willamso, Redford, Bennelss, 2003 in Sani and Mahasti, 2012). Without supervision and management of historical buildings, a city will lose its pattern and uniqueness (Idid, 1996 in Said et. al, 2013).

Said et al. (2013) stated that the effort of preservation becomes so important in revitalizing the cities and keeping its memories. Azhari and Mohamed (2012) also affirmed that the historical buildings preservation represent not only the energy, but also the community spirit and identity. That is why the place identity and sense of place motivated preservation where preservation effort should result in an area that expresses the cultural identity of people lived there.

Nowadays, place identity has been a common topic that discussed in many studies (Ginting, 2014). Some of the most familiar is Breakwell's theory that further developed by Twigger-Ross and Uzzel (in Ginting, 2014). The theory explained there are four principles forming the place identity, namely continuity, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and distinctiveness. Self-esteem means a self-evaluation where one identifies himself. According Twigger-Ross et al. (2003), a person would be happy with a place when it has a physical symbol that maintain and create proud feeling. In fact, they would avoid a place that does not create their esteem. Self-efficacy is defined as a person's ability to work in physical environment and social situation. This aspect relates to human needs to control the environment (Belk, 1992 in Altman and Low, 1992). Another principle of identity is distinctiveness, namely the desire to maintain the diversity of others. Meanwhile, continuity is an inseparable aspect in forming identity because it contains elements of time. In this aspect, the main thing is not the physical character of the place. Moreover, the main thing is the values it contains, the stability espoused values and connectedness memories of a person (memory, nostalgia, and experience).

The identity of a place will produce something special that can be observed or internalized by visitors (Urry, 1994). The identity will be embedded in their minds and not just as commercial value, but directly affects a person

heart or feelings because it displays local culture that allow heritage tourism will continuously grow (Page and Lawton, 1999). The values can provide a special experience (nostalgia, memory) to someone so that he recognizes the place (Yuen, 2005). Then, the place identity can support the quality of life and bring happiness to the people (Mohit, 2013). Moreover it would be economically useful since healthy and happy people can live and work better, so in the end they can give a contribution to their community (Sani and Mahasti, 2012).

3. Study area

The study took place in Medan City as the main gateway to the island of Sumatera in Indonesia. In line with Ashworth's statement, the history of Dutch Indies colonial era and the governance of Deli Sultanate has made Medan city a heritage place with place identity. The city also has many potencies to become one of the national tourism destinations, especially in the heritage tourism. Therefore, the area should be planned to strengthen the characteristics or identity of the area.

This study was conducted in the Maimoon Palace Heritage District in the center of Medan City. The study area that lies on Brigjen Katamso Street and Singamangaraja Street now has become one of the most attractive tourism destinations in the city (Figure 1). Researchers choose this area since it has three historical objects namely Maimoon Palace, Grand Mosque and Sri Deli Pond that are well known as the landmark of the Medan city (Figure 2). It becomes the uniqueness of the area and also reflects the authority of Malay Kingdom in the past.

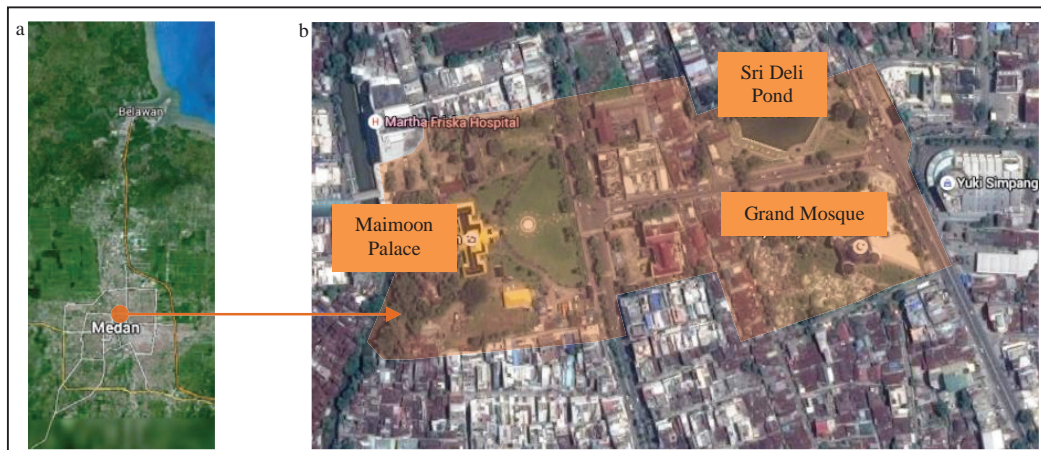


Fig. 1. (a) Medan City; (b) Maimoon Palace Heritage District

Source: Google earth, (2015)



Fig. 2. (a) Grand Mosque; (b) Maimoon Palace; (c) Sri Deli Pond

4. Methodology

This research is series of researches held in 2012 until 2014. In 2012, the researcher tried to identify the place identity in Maimoon Palace Heritage District based on four aspects of place identity, continuity, distinctiveness, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Breakwell, 1986). This research used mix method to discover tourists and local people perception about the study area place identity. The researcher did a depth interview with nine key respondents that play roles in North Sumatera Tourism; tourism stakeholders, cultural, head of Sumatera Utara Association of Travel Agency, and owner of heritage building in the study area. Then for the quantitative data, the researcher distributed 360 questionnaires to 144 tourists (60% domestic tourists: 40% foreign tourists) and 216 local people. These data then analyzed together to find out elements that become the place identity of the study area.

Findings of previous research are used in this research that aims to arrange a spatial planning model of heritage tourism area based on place identity in the same location. This research combines the spatial planning elements with the identity elements from the previous research. The spatial planning elements are obtained from the qualitative method through field observation, literature review, and depth interview result. Physical data from the field observation are collected in the form of a photograph and working sheet. These data includes land use and function, building's style and physical size, circulation and parking, open space, pedestrian walkway, street furniture, activity in the area, and preservation (Shirvani, 1985).

This planning inserts and combine all place identity elements in each spatial planning elements. Through literature review and study of the previous depth interview. This paper will only discuss one of the eight spatial planning elements, which is preservation. Thus, this study will discuss any objects in the area that goes into preservation and why it should be preserved (Figure 3).

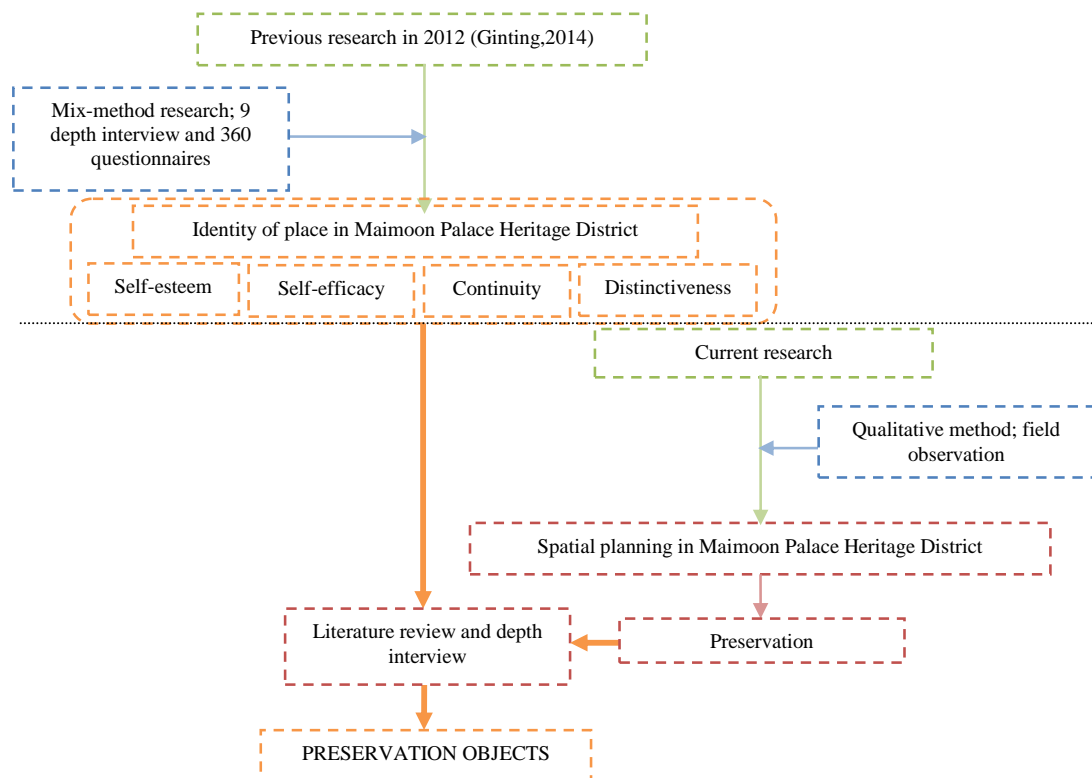


Fig. 3. Concept of research methodology

5. Findings and discussion

Previous research (Ginting, 2014) identified four aspects of place identity according to Breakwell (1986) in the study area. The result of questionnaires analyzed using SPSS version 20 and supported by depth interview shows the condition of the four place identity aspects in the area. Each of these aspects contained some elements in it, where the local people and tourists would assess the condition of these elements. This assessment used the Likert scale with a score of one to five. The score given by respondents determined their perception about each of the elements.

Based on the analysis result of the questionnaires, there are five elements that are very prominent in continuity aspect, namely historical buildings, historical story, cultural activity, pedestrian, and nostalgia (Ginting, 2014). The historical building that is still well preserved received the most positive response, both from local people and tourists, because of its attractiveness. Historical stories become the most favorable tourism object after the historical buildings for it can encourage the admiration of local people and tourists. Besides on historical story, local people and tourists in the area are also impressed with cultural activity in the area. The existence of pedestrian also encourages positive responses from local people and tourists to the area, because it helps the historical building preservation. Meanwhile, the nostalgia in the area is still less felt by the tourists. However, local people claimed to impress with the nostalgia in the area. Nostalgia, in this case, is a very special experience where it is a unique positive memory or a collection of memories of the past that can provide preferred alternative answers from the present (Ramshaw & Gammon, 2005 in Seifried & Meyer, 2010).

In distinctiveness aspect, the elements that received good perception from respondents are historical buildings, accessibilities, local product, and cultural activity (Ginting, 2014). In this aspect, the historical buildings also become the most favorable and attractive element for local people and tourists. During their visits, the respondents also had positive responses about the good accessibilities in the study area. Besides those elements, unique local product, and attractive cultural activity also receive good responses from local people and tourists.

In reviewing the self-esteem aspect in the study area, the analysis result of the questionnaires showed that both local people and tourists feel belonged to the area and became part of it. Local people, especially, claimed that there would be sadness for the loss of the area characteristic. It shows that there is self-esteem in the area. The depth interview with one of North Sumatra tourism stakeholder found that the self-esteem in the area comes from the historical buildings that draw the glory of Malay Kingdom in the past.

The aspect of self-efficacy is formed by the facilities that help people doing their activity in the area. These facilities include signage, public transportation, parking, pedestrian, bins, public toilets, and sitting area. The questionnaire result showed that the respondents in the area are not satisfied with these facilities. The condition happens especially with the bins, public toilets, and sitting area, which receive the lowest score from respondents.

The finding of previous research showed the elements that form and influence each of place identity aspect in the study area (Figure 4).

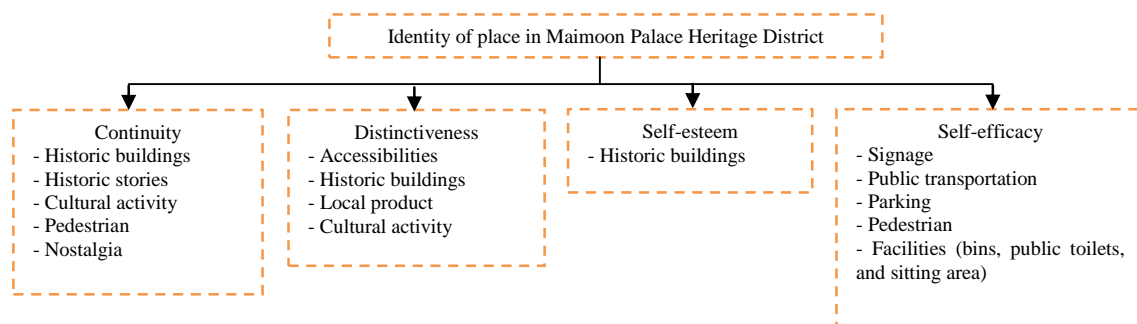


Fig. 4. Identity of place in study area

In this research, researchers put the place identity into the spatial planning in the area, especially preservation. In this case, not all of the place identity elements in the previous research are included in preservation planning. In this

phase, researchers used literature review and previous depth interview result to determine which element that should be included in preservation planning in the area. Furthermore, the literature review is also used to explain more reason in this preservation. This paper only discuss the place identity elements that become the preservation focus, and ignore the other elements that are not included in preservation.

5.1. *Preservation of continuity aspect*

To maintain the continuity in the research area, the elements that need to be preserved include historical buildings, historical stories, and nostalgia.

Historical building is important because its existence shows a picture of the past human activity in the area (Ginting, 2014) and bring the historical atmosphere and the relationship with the past (Paumier, 2004, Gospodini, 2002, and Kneafsey, 1998 in Ginting, 2014), so it can embody continuity in the context of the time and situation in a place (Twigger-Ross & Uzzel, 1996 in Ginting, 2014). In addition, the physical form of historical buildings and architectural styles also symbolizes a time when the building was built (Goodwin el, 2009). The historical building also contributes a big role in the tourism since it becomes the identity of the area. It happens in the area, where historical buildings become the most favorable object for local people and tourists. In fact, a tourism project that does not contain identity and sense of belonging will make the people abandoned the place in the end (Sani and Mahasti, 2012). There are three objects that are known historical buildings in the study area, namely Maimoon Palace, Grand Mosque, and Sri Deli Pond. These three historical buildings witness the growth of the city of Medan which filled with historical stories of the colonial government and Malay (Figure 2).

In the process of historical buildings preservation, the public interest will be affected by the condition of the preservation object (Grefe, 2004 in Azhari and Mohamed, 2012). It happens in the area where local people and tourists are very interested and impressed to see historical buildings in the area which still well preserved and they want the historical buildings to maintain in its original form. This fact proves the perception of Grefe where the interest of preservation depends on the object condition. Therefore, it can be concluded that the existence of historical building must be maintained and preserved. The most suitable act for historical buildings preservation in the area is maintaining them in the original forms and styles. Despite the good perception of local people and tourists, the field observation showed that there is physical damage occurs in some elements of the buildings. Therefore, the stakeholders must concern more about the buildings condition and initiate a renovation towards the buildings physical quality.

Historical stories are important to preserve because they create an understandable landscape and increase the interest towards the cultural heritage conservation (Knudsen & Greer, 2008), so it influenced the continuity in the study area. Harun (2011) in Azhari & Mohamed (2012) also stated that the conservation of the building requires knowledge and understanding of history that is represented by the building. In the study area, the historical story also becomes information for visitors that can not be separated from the presence of historical buildings because it illustrates how historical buildings established. Based on historical stories in the area, the three historical buildings were originally built into a unity by Deli Sultanate. They were constructed to fulfill the needs of family dwelling, administration, observance, and recreation (Figure 5).



Fig. 5. The historic buildings form a unique corridor unity

The historical stories are also the main attraction of heritage tourism objects (Ginting, 2014). In the study area, local people and tourists have positive responses to the historical stories. Most tourists who visit the area declared want to see the historical buildings after their introduction to the historical stories. It proves that the historical story of the area is necessary to develop heritage tourism objects. The findings indicated that the historical stories encourage a positive response to the visits in the area by forming its unique and continuous character. Therefore, the historical story should continue from generation to generation and should be preserved so the heritage tourism in the area will still known by tourists. Historical stories can be presented on a website or delivered to the traveler by the tour guide that managed by the stakeholders.

Nostalgia becomes very important in preserving continuity because nostalgia is very personal and emotional, where people may come back to their past through a particular object or symbol (Gabriel, 2000; McMurray & Pullen, 2008 in Seifried & Meyer, 2010). For example, the physical elements, structures and buildings can lead to feelings associated with nostalgia because it has a special meaning through symbols and experience (Fairley, 2003). Holbrook & Schindler (2003) in Seifried & Meyer (2010) believe that individuals can form a bond with a physical object to connect the experience. Often, a unique tradition as a non-physical object can strengthen the relationship between human and the physical object.

The reality in the study area showed that nostalgia needs to be preserved to increase tourists reaction. The previous research showed that the response to the nostalgia aspect of the area is still low, where respondents were less impressed with the memories of the past in the area. In particular, most of the tourists stated that the study area has not been able to provide them personal experiences. It showed that the values contained in the area were not able to provide a personal experience (nostalgia, memories) to the tourists and they are difficult to identify specific characteristics in the area. Even though, the depth interview showed that some tourists that have stayed in Medan in their childhood were impressed with the memories of the past. They stated that the existence of the three historical buildings as physical elements in the study area brought a special meaning to the people. The tradition of praying in the Grand Mosque also brings back the memories in the area. Therefore, the preservation of nostalgia relates to historical buildings and tradition in the area.

5.2. *Preservation of distinctiveness aspect*

In maintaining the area distinctiveness, the existence of historical building must be preserved because it draws uniqueness by donating a unique feature on the site. The previous study found that most local people and tourists recognized the existence of historical building in the area was very attractive. It shows that the study area has a uniqueness that distinguishes it from other places.

The building architectural style is also important to preserve because it forms the buildings uniqueness. The previous study shows that people are very interested in the architecture of historical buildings with its esthetic values that are unique. Historical buildings in studies area, such as Maimoon Palace, condensed with Malay culture that developed there. In Malay architecture, one of the elements that characterize the building is its ornament that involves esthetics to produce a better and attractive product. Besides that, the ornaments also contained symbolic values of a particular group of people and closely relates to the culture. Ornaments can be incorporated into various elements of spatial planning such as pedestrian pattern, information signs, street furniture or other elements to bring Malay ambiance there (Figure 6).

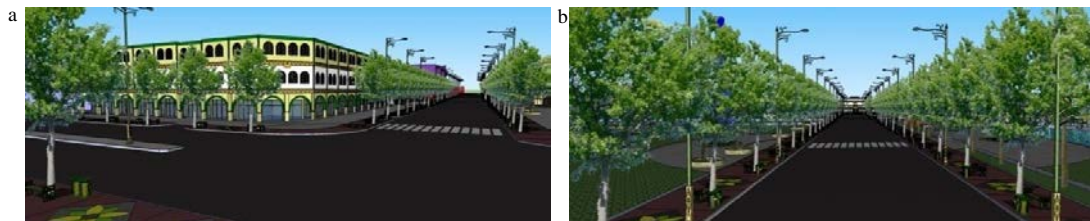


Fig. 6. (a) Malay ornaments in buildings facade; (b) Malay ornaments in pedestrian pattern and street furniture

5.3. *Preservation of self-esteem aspect*

Based on previous research, self-esteem in the area was built on the existence of heritage buildings that become the area characteristic and proof of past Deli Sultanate proud. Furthermore, the sense of pride and belonging of community and tourists are some factors in building people quality of life (Mohit, 2013). The loss of historical buildings will make the sense of pride, belonging and bounded to the study area fade away. Based on depth interview with Deli Sultanate family and the head of Sumatera Utara Association of Travel Agency, there is a feeling of sadness when a historical building torn down, and new building in the study area seemed disorganized and not in accordance with the authenticity of the initial building. Consequently, the loss of historical building will also cause the loss of their identity. In order to maintain local people and tourist self-esteem in the study area, heritage buildings must be preserved, too. Visitors must able to see heritage buildings and glory of the past in the area. From the field observation, the existence of information board in several locations interferes view to the heritage buildings. Therefore, location and size of the information board must be planned to keep the view of the heritage buildings.

5.4. *Preservation of self-efficacy aspect*

Preservation of self-efficacy aspects in the study area comes from the need to feel safe and comfort for residents and tourists along their activities. Therefore, preservation is planned to the supporting facilities, to support tourism activity in the district, especially nearby the heritage buildings. In fact, supporting facilities is important in building public perception. It becomes one of fundamental physical needs for people in doing their activity that form the quality of life (Mohit, 2013). Some of the facilities that could support the area include bins, public toilets, and sitting area. Previous research showed that both residents and tourists feel not satisfied with the facilities condition. Selection of these facilities as the focus to preserve is affected by the depth interview result that shown those three are the worst. Bins are rare to find that many people litter freely. The public toilet also lacks in amount and not clean. Meanwhile, there is no sitting area that tourists have to sit in the grass.

To support the efficacy and increase the satisfaction of both local people and tourists in the area, the city government and stakeholder must pay more attention to the supporting facilities. The city government must provide the bins in a certain range around the historical buildings to help the people maintained cleanliness. The sitting area is also needed to be placed in suitable setting so the tourists could take some rest while observing the historical building beauty. In fulfilling the people satisfaction in the area, Sri Deli Pond as an open space needs to provide public toilets while Maimoon Palace and Grand Mosque need to increase the quality of existing toilets (Figure 7).



Fig. 7. The supporting facilities in study area

Based on findings of this research, preservation in Maimoon Palace Heritage District must cover four elements (Figure 8). In keeping the continuity aspect in the area, it is a need to preserve the heritage building, historical story, and nostalgia. In keeping the distinctiveness and self-esteem aspects in the area, heritage building is also the main focus of preservation. Meanwhile to keep the self-efficacy aspect in the area, preserving the supporting facility, especially the sitting area, bins and public toilets need to be done.

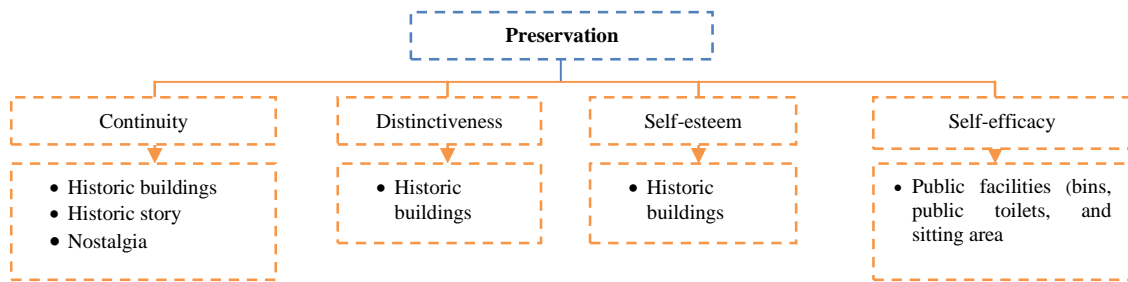


Fig. 8. The research findings

6. Conclusion

Preservation relates very closely to the identity of a place, especially in the historical area. Moreover, the place identity will build the significance of the place and affect people's quality of life. In a heritage tourism area, the place identity even gives uniqueness and becomes the main attraction for tourist. Therefore, preservation should be planned to support place identity in the area. Based on findings of this research, to support its place identity, the planning of preserving Maimoon Palace Heritage District must include the four elements; heritage building, historical story; nostalgia and supporting facilities.

Findings of this research could not directly apply for there is no detailed planning of spatial planning implementation. Therefore, researchers would suggest for advanced study to make a detailed preservation planning in order to complete this research implementation. Another limitation in this research is the findings that are different in each place. As history and human culture affect the concept of place identity, and then the value of place identity in study area not sure yet able to use in another area. Therefore researcher encourages other researchers to do similar research in another area to find out the effective way of a preservation effort.

Acknowledgements

Researchers would like to acknowledge the research funding from Research Institution of University of Sumatera Utara and the support from students of Architecture's Department, University of Sumatera Utara, Indonesia, who involved in this study.

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